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For if the King like not the Comedie,
Why then belike he likes it not perdie.
—*Hamlet* First Folio 3.2.269-70

metal . . . app. related in some way to μεταλλᾶυ to seek after, explore.
—*OED* 2, *M*: 667

As Great Shapesphere puns it.
—James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 295.3-4

"Do you like me, Kate?" asks Henry V. "*Pardonnez-moi*, I cannot tell vat is 'like me'" (*Henry V* 5.2.106-7). So culminates an extensive logic of "likeness" in the *Henriad*.[1] Deflecting likeness throughout his career, because he can brook no likeness if his rule is to be absolute, Henry V finally confronts, in Kate's French body and halting English tongue, the absolute consequences of the politics as well as the logic of likeness. How can one like the king when no one is like the king? Did not the king, after all, destroy his likenesses, Falstaff and Hotspur? History will only too bitterly prove that the king has no likeness when Henry VI ascends the throne. The king, in fact, has no likeness but himself: the king is so different, and practices such difference, that no one can tell, as Falstaff already understood, what is "like [him]" (*1 Henry IV* 2.5.228).[2]

In *Hamlet* (1600-1601), which is closely related to *Henry V* (1599), the logic of likeness will play itself

out again, though this time with more thrilling as they are also more terrifying consequences. "Is it not *like* the King?" Marcellus asks Horatio when the ghost appears, and Horatio replies, "As thou art to thyself" (1.1.57-8; emphasis added). But Hamlet says, only a short while later, "A was a man, take him for all in all, / I shall not look upon his *like* again" (1.2.186-7; emphasis added). And his lament can hardly fail to trouble us the more because we have just heard him scorn "my uncle, / My father's brother, . . . no more *like* my father / Than I to Hercules" (1.2.151-3; emphasis added). Whether too much or too little, *like*(ness), from the beginning, stalks the characters' talk — and thus our response as well.[3]

These instances, with a great many others (*like* occurs over 90 times in the play), suggest the thesis and the argument that I wish to pursue in this essay — namely, that one discourse for explaining the tragedy of *Hamlet* is that of the crisis of likeness, of which the psychopathology most revulsive, as it is also most recurrent in Western culture's self-representation, is incest. I argue, in particular, that Hamlet fears most uncontrollably his likeness not with his father, nor with Claudius, nor Horatio, nor Laertes, nor Fortinbras, nor Rosencrantz, nor Guildenstern, nor the players, nor Osric, nor Polonius, nor Ophelia, nor Yorick, but rather — and it is, after this list, precisely obvious who comes next — with his mother, Gertrude.[4] Hamlet is, indeed, as others have shown, like all these other characters in the play in some particular or particulars; but it is the likeness with Gertrude that he fears the most, not only the likeness with her bespoken by his and her sexual desires but also the likeness bespoken by his and her identities. Incest is not only copulation, incest is also copying. And how if Hamlet should be a copy of Gertrude? How if he should desire his father as she did? How if he should desire Claudius, as she does? (The homoerotic pervades this world, saturated as it may be with the heteroerotic.) How if he desired King Hamlet's death (Oedipus' conundrum) as she did? How stands it then in Denmark? How stands it then with Hamlet? How, to be blunt, stands it?

I take it that at least part of Hamlet's crisis, and at least one reason for his (in)famous hesitation, is the question of succession: "A little more than kin and less than kind" (1.2.65), *and never king*. Hamlet is less than kind toward Claudius because Claudius has made him more than kin, usurping the place of his father as well as the place of his mother's husband, and thus interposed himself between Hamlet and Hamlet.[5] (I will ignore, for reasons that I think are obvious, the distinction between Old Hamlet and Hamlet — Ophelia is my witness [cf. Garber 299; Calderwood 94]: "And with a look so piteous in purport / *As if he had been loosèd out of hell* / To speak of horrors, he comes before me" [2.1.83-5; emphasis added].) As long as Claudius reigns ("He that hath killed my king and whored my mother, / Popped in between th'election and my hopes" [5.2.65-6]), Hamlet cannot succeed to his (father's) throne. The sequence *kin* > *kind* cries out the missing graph. And if Hamlet is not to be (*kin*, *kind*,) *king*, then whom is Hamlet (to) (be) like?[6]

The answer is as strange to him as it is to us, at least at first. In the political logic on which the play insists, he is like Gertrude. He is like Gertrude because, blocked from the succession, he is in the feminine position ("Must,

like a whore, unpack my heart with words / And fall a-cursing like a very drab, / A scullion" [2.2.563-5; cf. Adelman 274]). Hamlet (*t-h-*[e] *m-a-l-e*)[7] is marked feminine (cf. Leverenz; see also Parker, *Shakespeare* 263). And it is from the feminine position that he must act for almost the rest of his life. Castrated and defective (the misogynist's icon of the despised female ["frailty, thy name is woman" (1.2.146)]), Hamlet lacks the Phallus. But, more, he is the site of the lack of the Phallus (at least in the patriarchal imaginary) — madness (thy name is woman).[8] Little wonder he does not like himself, he is not like himself: "For he was *like*ly, had he been put on / To have proved most royally" (5.2.341-2; emphasis added). But what "he" would have been put on? — this he or that (s)he, that is the question.[9]

The case I am making can be illustrated in a number of places in the play, but the following cross-section of act 1 will perhaps be most helpful (emphasis added throughout).

> MARCELLUS Look where it comes again.
> BARNARDO In the same figure *like* the King that's dead.
> . . .
> BARNARDO Looks it not *like* the King? — Mark it, Horatio.
> HORATIO Most *like*. It harrows me with fear and wonder.
> (1.1.38-9, 41-2)

> MARCELLUS Is it not *like* the King?
> HORATIO As thou art to thy self. (57-8)

> HAMLET A was a man. Take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his *like* again.
> HORATIO My Lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
> HAMLET Saw? Who? (1.2.186-9)

> HORATIO A figure *like* your father,
> Armed at all points exactly, cap-à-pie,
> Appears
> . . .
> The apparition comes. I knew your father;
> These hands are not more *like*. (199-201, 211-12)

> HORATIO It would have much amazed you.
> HAMLET Very *like*, very *like* (234-5)

This sample may serve as a guide. It registers the insistence in the play on the almost independent agency of *like*(ness).

If we take this sample as a guide, we will find that the play charges the word *like* with a sometimes almost unbearable predictivity (and productivity):

> HORATIO If your mind *dislike* anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit. (5.2.155-6; emphasis added)

I am arguing that only when we have paused, if just a (heart)beat, over the words 'if your mind dislike," can we begin to take the measure of what follows:

> HAMLET Not a whit. We defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? (157-61)

We hear, now, how "their re*pair* hither" will actually pair Hamlet, and s*pare* him (even a *spar*row), with the likeness in which he will leave this life, as ready as a man can be ("Since no man has aught [but also: has sought][10] of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?"), foil now (192), likeness even, to Laertes ("This *likes* me well," Hamlet says of his foil [203; emphasis added]) in that "foolery . . . such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman" (153-4), which he feels "about [his] heart — but it is no matter" (150-51), since he is now about to cross ~~the~~ woman, the *mat(t)er*, out,[11] resume his likeness, assume the Phallus, and its awful price, death:

> HAMLET Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
> If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
> And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
> Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
> Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
> Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged.
> His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (170-6)

If Hamlet now from himself is *not* taken away — if he is coincident with himself now, if he is one with himself, if his madness is gone, if he is *like* himself (in the Symbolic with the reign of the Phallus) — then, clearly, such sanity, at least here, is prologue to murder and, perhaps, worse.[12] Laertes responds: "I do receive your offered love *like* love, / And will not wrong it" (188-9; emphasis added). The depth of Laertes' hatred presumably we must measure by the likes of the fissure opened in his love by *like*(ness). The treachery of *like*(ness) perhaps nowhere in poetry receives more vivid likening; and post-modernism's agony over representation of all sorts is perhaps nowhere more tersely represented in early modern literature: love *like* love is *not* love.[13]

Like derives from a root meaning "form" or "shape" and in Anglo-Saxon means "body" (Dutch, Danish, and Swedish instances of the word mean "corpse").[14] I think it would be difficult to exaggerate how important this history is to the tragedy of Hamlet:[15] in a different body (a son's), Hamlet is nonetheless insufficiently different from his father or his mother, too *like* them (especially his mother), to enter into his patrimony or his matrimony; separation in Hamlet and for Hamlet has failed, and thus incest, the scandal of (con)fusion (failure of separation), haunts him throughout the play.[16] Thus, to take one easily overlooked example, the name *Claudius* contains the Latin root *claud-* ("shut," "close")[17] which produces *claudicare*, "to limp" (Skeat 93; Ayto 118). Oedipus, the clubfoot (who limps [Sophocles 14 and 123-4]), shadows

Hamlet (*t-h-*[e]*-l-a-m-e*) in the uncle, Claudius, who commits incest (so Hamlet calls it [1.2.157; 1.5.83]) with his mother, Gertrude. Everywhere Hamlet is surrounded with too much likeness:[18]

> KING CLAUDIUS Thy loving father, Hamlet.
> HAMLET My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so my mother. (4.3.52-4)

Madness, then (or, at least, its simulation), is his one recourse to difference. But he is precisely not mad in the closet scene with his mother (though she thinks he is), where likeness, specifically the body, overwhelms him, confuses him, and destines him to meet his double in Laertes.[19] Here, in a likeness of the Oedipal crisis, a pseudo-Oedipus, in effect, Hamlet kills the wrong father (the irony, Lacan might say, of assuming the Phallus and its simulacrum of authority) while himself playing father to his mother with his Ham(i)let(ic) lecture to her of, and from, the Symbolic: "O, throw away the worser part of it, / And live the purer with the other half!" (3.4.148-9). Father, husband, son — Hamlet is all and yet none.

The logic of likeness is fierce and intractable. To be like is to be different (enough) to mark the space across which likeness can synapse: too much difference and the space is chasmic, no communication at all obtains; too little difference and the space is chaosmic, (con)fusion threatens to overwhelm communication. Nowhere in art is this terrifying logic more palpable and threatening than in theater, for theater is the space of likeness — without likeness theater is impossible.[20]

Hence *The Mousetrap*, the postscript that is also a prescript (cf. Cavell 189-91):

> HAMLET I'll have these players
> Play something *like* the murder of my father . . . (2.2.571-2; emphasis added)
> KING CLAUDIUS What do you call the play?
> HAMLET *The Mousetrap*. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the *image* of a murder done in Vienna. (3.2.216-18; emphasis added)

The play within the play is the incest of the play (the play playing with its own), the perverse doubling that foregrounds drama's perpetual disruption of the boundaries between self and other, male and female, inner and outer, et cetera. More than the specular *mise en abîme* of postmodernism, this moment, when the tropical is the trapical, tropes as it traps the founding anxiety of Western thought, not that all knowledge is mimetic (hence derivative, secondary, belated — Plato's grievance [cf. Parker, *Shakespeare* 180]) but that it is anamnesic, a recalling of the always-already forgotten (Plato's Socratic reverie).[21] For this is what is trapped and troped in the play within the play, where the mouse that is trapped is not Claudius, not Claudius at all (cf. Adelman 275-6; Parker, *Margins* 265), but rather her whom Hamlet calls Claudius' "mouse," his mother Gertrude (3.4.167) — that soft, round, furry thing.[22] And, just so, Hamlet

knew already but had "forgotten" that the guilty mouse was his mother: "Madam, how *like* you this play? / QUEEN GERTRUDE The lady protests too much, methinks" (3.2.209-10; emphasis added). "The Queen, the Queen's to blame" — Adelman (275) is exactly right. So what more does Hamlet need?

Of knowledge, nothing, of course. But knowledge is not enough. If knowledge were enough, who of us would not be (thin)king (cf. 2.2.244-5)? No, Hamlet needs difference (Garber 316). Which is to say, identity. He needs to I.D. the culprit else his own I.D. will never become an I.[23] And so he waits for Claudius, to con*claud* his trap. And at the moment of closure, he observes, "if the King *like* not the Comedie, / Why then *belike* he *likes* it not perdie" (3.2.269-70; emphasis added). The misprision is exact: it is not a "comedie" (rather a "tragedy" [3.2.133]), but it is (an invitation) to *come die* (I retain the first folio's spelling of *comedie*) and so the king *likes* it not ("I *like* him not, nor stands it safe with us" [3.3.1; emphasis added]). The king likes it not because it be-likes the king. Hamlet's hesitation is not a problem of knowledge, then, it is a problem of I.D.-ing, of becoming able, finally, to say, "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane!" (5.1.243-4) — which amounts to saying (let us not flinch from admitting it): "I did it, I am to blame."[24] Every child bereaved of a parent "knows," at some level, that s/he killed that parent (herein, for me, lies the genius of Cavell's reading of *The Mousetrap* [179-91]); and (dis)owning that "knowledge" (which is false but feels, all the same, very real) can be so great a burden that the child does not, cannot, survive it: "How stand I then, / That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd" (4.4.9.46-7).[25] Indeed, how does Hamlet stand?[26]

Laertes, on the other hand, I take it, has had an I.D. all along — he is Polonius' (and his [absent] mother's) son, Ophelia's brother: he is the one who *r-e-l-a-t-e-s*:

> POLONIUS This above all — to thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man. (1.3.78-80)

It is his role to relate (within the Symbolic) in just that way that defines Hamlet's failure to relate:

> KING CLAUDIUS Laertes, was your father dear to you?
> Or are you *like* the painting of a sorrow,
> A face without a heart?
> LAERTES Why ask you this?
> KING CLAUDIUS Not that I think you did not love your father . . .
> (4.7.89-93; emphasis added)

Of course not; of course Laertes loved his father; there can be no question, et cetera. But that, of course, really is not the question. The question really is, how is it that Laertes *a-l-t-e-r-(e)-s* Hamlet's ego? how is it that Laertes' I.D. alters Hamlet's I? We may answer this question with Girard, with Serres, with Lacan, with Fineman, with Adelman, with Freud, with Cavell, with Parker,

with Irigaray, with Garber, with Lévi-Strauss, and perhaps with others who have addressed themselves in our recent cultural critique to the crisis of doubling. But fundamental to any answer we may offer will be the play's prior insight that the subject is not a subject except as anOther — "HAMLET I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence. But to know a man well were to know himself" (5.2.102.30-32)[27] — even as the subject cannot speak without an (H)*oratio* ("speech") other to it:

> HAMLET O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity a while,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story. (286-91)

Everywhere Hamlet turns, he confronts the reality of incest, which is hardly reducible to mere copulation — incest is also copying (fusion and confusion). And to grasp the import of incest as copying in *Hamlet*, it is necessary finally to confront one of the scandals of the play, or its indulgence in puns — "We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (5.1.126-7).[28] A pun is incestuous, the copulation of signifiers that should remain separate, producing a word containing imperfect copies of other words (Shoaf, *Milton* 60-71). Moreover, says Dr. Johnson:

> A quibble [that is, pun] is to Shakespeare what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it. (21-2)

In many respects, this is an extraordinarily important piece of criticism (and not just of Shakespeare), but for my purposes what matters most in it is the demonizing of "quibbles" that culminates in the (predictable) demonizing of the woman (Cleopatra). You just know a pun has got to be (a) female:

> HAMLET Do you think I meant country matters?
> OPHELIA I think nothing, my lord.
> HAMLET That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
> OPHELIA What is, my lord?
> HAMLET No thing.
> OPHELIA You are merry, my lord. (3.2.105-10)

Hardly the least famous pun in English literature, "country matters" will do just nicely to make the point ("thing"): a pun like "c(o)unt(ry) mat(t)ers" is a no thing[29] (a "cunt mother" and a "mother cunt") — that is to say, irreducibly plural ("ce sexe qui n'en est pas un"), its lips are bilabial, twofold, geminated, double.[30] A pun like "c(o)unt(ry) mat(t)ers" scandalizes the Phallus, the realm of the Symbolic, which likes things hard and fast. And so Hamlet puns. This *m-e-t-a-l* (H) a-m-l-e-t, "as great Shapesphere puns it," who finds Ophelia "mettle more attractive" (3.2.99), puns remorselessly throughout the play, even unto the very end — "The rest is silence" (5.2.300) — and precisely scandalizes those who serve the Symbolic (and in turn are served by it):

> KING CLAUDIUS How fares our cousin Hamlet?
> HAMLET Excellent, i'faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.
> KING CLAUDIUS *I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not mine.*
> HAMLET *No, nor mine now.* [*To* POLONIUS] My lord, you played once i'th' university, you say.
> POLONIUS That I did my lord, and was accounted a good actor.
> HAMLET And what did you enact?
> POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th' Capitol. Brutus killed me.
> HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.
> (3.2.84-96; emphasis added)

"These words are not mine." Indeed. That is the question. Whose are the words?[31] some "c-*H-A-M-E-L*-eon's"? The words "my desire" can be uttered by any one of hundreds of millions of speakers of English. And shall I labor under the illusion that my desire is special? Why, of course I shall. So does everyone. So does Hamlet. Which, of course, is why he is (apparently) mad. To make words one's own is to appropriate them to meanings so idiotic (as well as idiolectal) as to sound mad:

> POLONIUS What is the matter, my lord?
> HAMLET Between who?
> POLONIUS I mean the matter you read, my lord. (2.2.193-5)

But then madness has a way of sounding different:

> POLONIUS Though this be madness, yet there is method in't. — Will you walk out of the air, my lord?
> HAMLET Into my grave.
> POLONIUS Indeed, that is out o'th' air. [*Aside*] How *pregnant* sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously *be delivered of.* (2.2.203-209; emphasis added)

Madness, punning, has a way of sounding like (a) woman: *pregnant* and *delivered of* meanings in which Reason and Sanity (the Symbolic) are not so pro(s)per-ous,[32] puns (two meanings in one sound) are the fee males must pay to speak:

> HAMLET Yet I,
> A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
> Like John-a-dreams, *unpregnant of* my cause,
> And *can say nothing* . . . (2.2.543-6; emphasis added)

Until he is pregnant, Hamlet "can say nothing." In order to speak, Hamlet must give birth:

> KING CLAUDIUS Love? His affections do not that way tend,
> Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
> Was not like madness. There's *something in his soul*
> O'er which his melancholy *sits on brood,*
> And I do doubt, *the hatch* and the disclose
> Will be some danger . . . (3.1.161-6; emphasis added)

In order to be, Hamlet must be(come) female — at the least, he must trope himself as female, and this he does by punning, for in his mad punning he participates in that two-in-one-ness that yokes madness, punning, and woman.[33] All are improper (that is, promiscuous, but also metaphoric),[34] and they prosper in pregnancy and delivery, in breeding (not to mention talkativeness). And we know what scandal attends such (s)excess: "Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" (3.1.122-3). Ophelia must be chastised, even if she should be chaste, "for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his *likeness*" (3.1.113-15; emphasis added). Ophelia must be (a) nun/none, threat to "unpregnant" Hamlet that she is — "ti opheilô; what do I owe?" as he might say.[35] After all, she is the thing of nought, O(we), that naughty thing, waiting to be filled — *O feel/fill ya*, the alpha and the omega (reversed), lacking only one vow-el, *u*.[36]

Surely, *Hamlet* rocks us so just because in its madness it teaches us what we pay for the (communal illusion of the) straight and true, the hard and fast, the pure and simple, et cetera: we pay in reality — in the loss of reality — for copies of our desire proliferating in the Symbolic. Every line you draw, every definition you make, "every breath you take, I'll be watching you." The Police, of course, are another name for the signifier, whose I, we have been told, is panoptical (Foucault 228). The more copies of ourselves we make, the more copies of our desires proliferate, the more likely our secrets are to secrete (the play oozes with secretions and secrets alike).

> HAMLET So, oft it chances in particular men
> That, for some vicious mole of nature in them — . . . (1.4.18.7-18.8)

HAMLET Well said, old mole. Canst work i'th earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer. (1.5.164-5)

Even before the mole begins to dig under his feet, Hamlet, such *m-e-t-a-l*, "as Great Shapesphere puns it," knows the mole has already mined his fault(-line): he "[s]hall in the general censure take corruption / From that particular fault" (1.4.18.19-18.20; cf. Adelman 267-8). The ghost is but a copy of the mole Hamlet has seen already within himself (cf. Holland 172), minor that he is. Hamlet is always already H-*o*-mlet (*m-o-l-e*), the *hommelette*,[37] or "little man" (and "broken egg")[38] — that is, the *infans* whose unorganized desire, like Claudius' "rouse" (1.4.9), threatens arousal (because unlimited, without boundary) and hence also retaliation: the mole in Hamlet is desire for his mother, and so the mole outside Hamlet is (the ghost's) desire for his mother — Hamlet is frightened finally by Hamlet because finally Hamlet also desires Hamlet.[39]

Because the ghost is but a copy of the mole Hamlet has seen already within himself, we can almost hear him say, "would it were real," or, perhaps more precise, "would it were a true copy." Still, it would be a copy only and could not set him free. Not least of the many achievements in Shakespeare studies in our time has been the demonstration of the importance of *copia* to his writing.[40] It seems obvious now that we should understand Shakespearean rhetoric explicitly in terms of copiousness. The obvious evidence of copiousness is a copy (they are the same word [Skeat 111; Cave 3-9]). If something is rotten in the state of Denmark, this is surely, as countless others before me have noted, because Elsinore is overripe ([*s*]-*i-n- o-r- e-l-s-e*), teeming with and overrun by copies — too many Hamlets in particular, for example (cf. Garber 132). The mystery of the play, which no reading will ever plumb or exhaust, seems most spectral here, where it adumbrates Shakespeare's obsession with doubles, twins, mirrors, and copies (Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*). As Shakespeare's art is unimaginable without "quibbles," so too is it unimaginable without twins: both puns and twins are two much in the same plays; and that seems to have been the way he liked it.

I don't know why. *Coincidentia oppositorum*? Paradox? Plotinus ("All knowing comes by likeness" [*Ennead* 1, Tractate 8, 66])? Increases in capital (Halpern; Kamps)? "The habit of arguing *in utramque partem*"(Altman 34)? Doubtless many answers will come from many others.[41] But if I may, I will suggest the following. The method I have used in this essay I call juxtology (Shoaf, "The Play of Puns"). I use juxtology to approach what for me is one of the most provocative issues in life and art alike and, predictably, as vexing as it is provocative — namely, coincidence.[42] I think, in particular, that it is the special effect of poetry to challenge, correct, and deepen the ordinary or accepted notion of coincidence, exposing in such a notion our efforts to "botch the words up fit to [our] own thoughts" (4.5.10), to constrain and control, by calling them coincidences, what are, in fact, complex connections of language and reality, *juxtologues* (*kin-kind* [*-king*] is a juxtologue in Hamlet's world, for example), that typically disturb, even frighten us, because they confront us with the uncanny feeling of our otherness (*déjà vous*, if you like). *Hamlet*, I believe, is *the* juxtological play in Shakespeare's writings: "O, 'tis most sweet / When in one

line two crafts directly meet" (3.4.185.8-185.9); or again, "Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service — two dishes, but to one table. That's the end" (4.3.23-5). Whatever autobiographical impulse or historical impingement may account for this distinction of the play, to it I propose we add the following, very simple complement: when the actor plays, he twins himself, assumes a juxta-pose between himself and the (other of the) character, and therein says to us: become a pun, "as you like it."[43]

Notes

1. As I have shown in "'For there.'"

I first began the current and related studies in conjunction with my work on "du*a*ls" and "du*e*ls" in Milton's poetry during a Fellowship year funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (1982-83). My work with *Hamlet*, in particular, began in the mid-eighties and shows the results of my early engagement with the writings of Lacan, whose particular essay on *Hamlet* has also played a role in the present study.

I am pleased to acknowledge the NEH again for another Fellowship, this year (1999-2000), during which I have been able to complete and revise this essay.

2. The full text of the relevant passage reads:

> FALSTAFF 'Sblood, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish — O, for breath to utter what is *like* thee! — you tailor's yard, you sheath, you bowcase, you vile standing tuck —
>
> PRINCE Well, breathe a while, and then to't again, and when thou hast tired thyself in base *comparisons*, hear me speak but this.
> (2.5.226-32; emphasis added).

All citations of Shakespeare's texts in this essay are from *The Norton Shakespeare*. All quotations from the first folio are taken from *The First Folio of Shakespeare* and will henceforth be cited as F.

Spevack lists thousands of occurrences of *like* in Shakespeare. I plan to study them and to publish my findings, from time to time, in such essays as this one and the one cited above in note one.

3. Such s/talking is most terrifying, in all of Shakespeare's characters, in Iago, who, as his name says (*I ago* = "I act, perform, do, or play"), likes, or not, whomever and however it serves his plot — in I/ago we hear the d/evil of a word.

4. Like all readers of *Hamlet*, I owe a debt to Adelman; I have read her justly famous essay both in *Suffocating Mothers* and in Wofford's *Hamlet* case study. I cite the case study version since it is likelier to be more widely available (for the same reason, I cite Garber's renowned essay in the case study version, too). My chief difference from Adelman, after my focus on *like* itself, is my emphasis on Hamlet's (con)fusion with his parents; or, put it this way, for me incest is

as much trope as it is psychopathology (from this it will be seen that my path to my conclusions passes through Lacan from an origin more in Heidegger than in Freud).

I am also indebted, here and elsewhere in this essay, to Calderwood (63, in particular, in this instance), and to the splendid studies by Parker.

5. Cf. *The Norton Shakespeare*: "Hamlet hides within himself a spirit of political resistance, a subversive challenge to a corrupt, illegitimate regime shored up by lies, spies, and treachery" (1660).

6. For a different although not unrelated reading of this line, see Lupton and Reinhard, who argue, in particular — and helpfully, I think — that "as a pun about punning, about linguistic and sexual similarity and difference, the line enacts the structural incest between literal incest and incest of the letter" (3).

7. I will represent anagrams in this essay in this form: I am concerned to represent letters in all their insistence and (seeming) impertinence.

8. That is, *le Nom-du-Père* does not function in Hamlet to support the Symbolic order: see Lacan's *Écrits* 278 and 577ff.; see also Evans 119.

9. Notice now the excruciating irony of Hamlet's Hercules proportion —

Claudius : Hamlet
≠
Old Hamlet : Hercules

As even someone with little Latin and less Greek would know, Hercules was the victim of a *woman*, Hera, throughout his life (Gr. *Ἡρακλῆς* [*-κλέης*], f. *Ἥρα,* Hera, wife of Zeus + *κλέος* glory, renown, lit. 'having or showing the glory of Hera' — *OED* II, *sub voce*). In other words, all four men, tragically, are, contrary to Hamlet's proportion, just a*like*, showing the glory of Her(a).

10. See Stewart *passim* on perception of juncture in poetic discourse.

11. I follow Lacan to understand and represent the overturning of the generality of ~~the~~ woman in Hamlet's emerging self-consciousness: the illusion of ~~the~~ woman is gradually fading before the reality of this particular woman, Gertrude (and Ophelia must die before this will be consummated); see "God and the Jouissance of ~~The~~ Woman" and "A Love Letter."

On the importance to understanding *Hamlet* of the wordplay between Latin *mater* and English *matter* (which derives from *mater*), see Ferguson, especially 294-5; see also Parker, *Shakespeare* 254, 263.

12. F1 continues Hamlet's speech just quoted, crucially from my perspective, with

> Sir, in this Audience,
> Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd euill,
> Free me so farre in your most generous thoughts,
> That I haue shot mine Arrow o're the house,
> And hurt my *Mother*. (5.2.177-81 [in F's orthography; emphasis added])

Q1 and Q2 have "brother," which may in the end be a better reading, but I wish to observe that the textual history of the play includes, if only as an error, the

agony as well as the irony of Hamlet's renewed "sanity." See, further, *The Norton Shakespeare*, which also cites this variant (1752).

13. As others have noted, the rhetorical device most frequent in *Hamlet* that bears the burden of splitting/doubling is hendiadys; see Holland:

> one of the tragedy's two characteristic figures of speech: hendiadys, which means expressing a single idea by two nouns or adjectives parted by a conjunction: "the sensible and true avouch of mine own eyes," "the gross and scope of mine opinion . . ." (167)

The word *like* can be understood to spawn perverse hendiadys: splitting where there should be no division — "love *like* love." From this perspective, the word can also be seen as an agent of *Spaltung*, which Lacan, following but modifying Freud, reminds us, is "cette refente . . . que le sujet subit de n'être sujet qu'en tant qu'il parle" (Écrits 634), "the split which the subject undergoes by virtue of being a subject *only in so far as he speaks*" (Écrits: *A Selection* 269; emphasis added).

On the other hand is isocolon (Ferguson 293) — "balanced clauses joined by 'and'" — which is the rhetorical device favored by Claudius:

> the principle of similarity . . . governs Claudius's syntax. . . . Claudius's isocolonic style is also characteristically oxymoronic: opposites are smoothly joined by syntax and sound, as for instance in these lines from his opening speech:
>
> Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
> Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
> Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
> With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
> With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
> Taken to wife . . . (1.2.8-14)

For another view of splitting, hendiadys, and doubling in *Hamlet*, see Kerrigan 79-81.

14. See Skeat, *sub voce*; also Ayto, 295. For a discussion of Shakespeare's neologism "incorpsed" (4.7.72), see Ferguson, 301ff.

15. And to the "tragedy" of *Hamlet*: the notorious difficulty of the play's genre, even its scandal, can be compassed, at least partially, just here: *Hamlet* is obviously *like* "revenge tragedy" and, just as obviously, it is not — *Hamlet*, like Hamlet, is trying to break free from its likeness to predecessors.

16. In what I consider one of his most moving meditations on the human condition, Lacan writes, in "Position de l'inconscient" (I quote at some, though not full, length from Écrits):

> *Separare,* séparer, ici se termine en *se parere,* s'engendrer soi-même . . . ce glissement du sens d'un verbe à l'autre . . . est fondé dans leur commun appariement à la fonction de la *pars.*

> La partie n'est pas le tout, comme on dit, mais d'ordinaire inconsidérément. Car il faudrait accentuer qu'elle n'a avec le tout rien à faire. Il faut en prendre son parti, elle joue sa partie toute seule. Ici, c'est de sa partition que le sujet procède à sa parturition. Et ceci n'implique pas la métaphore grotesque qu'il se mette au monde à nouveau. Ce que d'ailleurs le langage serait bien embarrassé d'exprimer d'un terme originel, au moins dans l'aire de l'indoeuropéen où tous les mots utilisés à cet emploi ont une origine juridique ou sociale. *Parere,* c'est d'abord procurer — (un enfant au mari). C'est pourquoi le sujet peut se procurer ce qui ici le concerne, un état que nous qualifierons de civil. Rien dans la vie d'aucun ne déchaine plus d'acharnement à y arriver. Pour être *pars,* il sacrifierait bien une grande part de ses intérêts. . . .
>
> Mais ce qu'il comble ainsi n'est pas la faille qu'il rencontre dans l'Autre, c'est d'abord celle de la perte constituante d'une de ses parts, et de laquelle il se trouve en deux parts constitué. Là gît la torsion par laquelle la séparation représente le retour de l'aliénation. C'est qu'il opère *avec* sa propre perte, qui le ramène à son départ. (843)

I despair of any adequate translation of this testimony. But I will say that this meditation, on the subject moving from "sa partition . . . à sa parturition," from his parting to his birth to his departing, seems to me also to express some crucial part of Shakespeare's art.

17. On "close" in the play, see Parker, *Shakespeare* 254-5, who also notes the play with "closet" (254).

18. Cf. Adelman 264-5; Calderwood 63; and Fineman 89, especially.

19. Here I acknowledge my debt to Girard and Serres, the two theorists of doubling and competition/comparison from whom I have learned the most about these issues. In particular, I wish to record my admiration for the work of Serres, especially *The Parasite*, from which I feel I have learned a great deal. I owe a debt, also, to the work of Fineman.

20. Even in the postmodern, I take it, since the premise of likeness must be present in order to be deconstructed. Cf. Calderwood 192.

21. See the *Meno*, 368-71. For an excellent meditation on memory in *Hamlet*, see Garber 328ff., especially.

22. Which was not stirring at the beginning: "BERNARDO Have you had quiet guard? / FRANCISCO Not a mouse stirring" (1.1.7-8). Here it is pertinent to note that repetition in *Hamlet* is often a smear of words, a certain stain, that spreads across the play even as rottenness spreads through Elsinore and Denmark; and *like*(ness) itself (known otherwise as the "body") is the (name of the) contagion. See also Parker, *Shakespeare*: "Words themselves are coupled in this play with a sense of pestilent breeding" (218).

23. I work (and play) from Freud's famous if cryptic utterance, "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden" (*SE* XXII, 80), where "Es" is Freud's German for "Id," the "it" of the unconscious. I greatly admire Lacan's translation, "Là où c'était, peut-on dire, là où s'était, voudrions-nous faire qu'on entendit, c'est mon devoir que je vienne à être" (Écrits 417-18), "There where it was . . . it is my duty that I should come to being" (Écrits: *A Selection* 129).

24. "To exist is to take your existence upon you, to enact it, as if the basis of human existence is theater, even melodrama. . . . Hamlet's extreme sense of theater I take as his ceaseless perception of theater, say show, as an inescapable or metaphysical mark of the human condition. . . . His bar — his lack of 'advancement' into the world — is expressed in one's sense (my sense) of him as the ghost of the play that bears his and his father's name, a sense that his refusal of participation in the world is his haunting of the world. (As if he is a figure in a play.) He overcomes his refusal only in announcing his death" (Cavell 187-8).

25. Cf. Adelman (280), who notes, as does Garber, too (134), the electrifying ambiguity in "have" — possession or action?

26. By this point, the reader will have heard the echolalia in *Hamlet* of *stand* — an essay on this word in the play could be written showing that men use it on occasions and in ways where it resonates with undertones of erotic (erectile) crisis.

27. And see also: "HAMLET For by the image of my cause I see / The portraiture of his" (5.2.75-78); or: "Horatio — or I do forget myself" (1.2.161; and see, further, Garber 311).

28. See Calderwood 80ff., 174ff., and 194; Ferguson, 292-5; and Parker, *Shakespeare* 1ff.

29. On "thing" and "thing of nought" in Shakespeare, see Willbern (and for the obscene sense, in particular, his notes 3 and 4 [260]). This essay is now reprinted in his book, *Poetic Will*, 125-42. I wish to acknowledge here an enduring debt to Burckhardt, "*King Lear*: The Quality of Nothing" in *Shakespearean Meanings* 237-59.

30. I cite, of course, Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un,* one of the most important works of French feminist critique, in part just because of the power of the p(as)un in its title.

31. About the line, "I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th' Capitol," *The Norton Shakespeare* informs us: "Perhaps an allusion to Shakespeare's own *Julius Caesar*; the actor who first played Polonius may also have played the part of Caesar" (1710). Here, I propose, is also the incest of drama, playing with its own: "It was a brute part [role, as well as appendage] of him, to kill so capital a calf there."

32. On the "proper" and the problematics of "property" in regard to the senses of words, see the essay by Derrida. From one perspective, this is among the oldest problems in Western philosophy. Plato is concerned with it, for example, in the *Cratylus*. Heidegger addresses it especially in the essay "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)." See also, for a historical overview, Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* 36ff.

33. Here my work merges most productively with Adelman's: she shows that the play is at a very deep level about Hamlet's coming to terms with the mother, Gertrude; I show that in order to do this, Hamlet must first "become" female — give birth to, be-like, himself. Cf. Wheeler 197.

34. In the Latin rhetorical tradition, *improprie* is one word used to mean "metaphorically"; another, equally suggestive, is *abusive* (reflecting the Greek *catachresis*, "against usage") — see Shoaf, *Dante* 33-4 and notes 24-7.

35. Consider the two Greek verbs most like the name Ophelia (I transliterate to emphasize the likeness): opheilô, and ophellô, respectively, "owe, have to pay or account for," and "increase, enlarge, strengthen" (Liddell, Scott, Jones). Hamlet owes Ophelia in many senses, not least perhaps in that she (if he makes her pregnant) increases and enlarges, having first made him increase and enlarge (erection). He owes her his love, he owes her to her family, he owes her (potential) child by him to his lineage (the anxiety of the patriarchy within the Symbolic). Ophelia not only represents, she *is* obligation. But, as the other Greek word like this word suggests, she also "advance[s a thing], make[s] it thrive" — she is "useful" ("ophelimity" [OED II, *sub voce*]): I find here, in debt and use, the obscure but palpable paradox of likeness itself.

36. Lest my irony be lost in the monotone of ideologizing, let me insist that I ventriloquize — I personally do not believe Ophelia deserves chastisement, even as, I know, my commentary here perforce chastises her all over again (see, further, Dane).

37. Lacan's pun is of great importance, I think, in understanding *Hamlet* (see the next note especially). Anika Lemaire helpfully summarizes his argument from 1966, "Discussion de l'article . . .":

> The new-born child, he says, makes one think of the androgynes described by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium,* or at least the state in which they were left after the division imposed on them by Zeus.
>
> With the cutting of the umbilical cord, the new-born child, like the Androgynes, finds itself separated from a part of itself, torn from the mother's internal membranes. Birth causes it to lose its anatomical complement.
>
> The *infans*, Lacan goes on, is like a broken egg which spreads out in the form of an *hommelette* [a portmanteau word meaning both "little man" and "omelette" (trans.)]. Allusion is made here to the instinct as it can be represented in its origins.
>
> To prevent the *hommelette* invading everything and destroying everything in its path, it must be enclosed, it must be assigned limits.
>
> The libido, the instinct, will be maintained within corporeal limits and will henceforth be unable to flow completely other than by way of "erotogenic zones," which are rather like valves opening towards and by the outside.
>
> . . . [T]he delimitation of the erotogenic zone has the effect of canalizing the libido (or functional metabolism) and transforming it into a "partial instinct." The erotogenic zone is a cut or aperture inscribed in a suitable anatomical site: for example, the lips, the gap between the teeth, the edges of the anus, the tip of the penis, the vagina, the palpebral slit.
>
> Limited and canalized in this way, the libido never appears in its entirety in the subjective world and a good part of it is lost. The permanent human feeling of dissatisfaction and incompleteness is therefore to be "mythically" explained by the separation the child undergoes at birth. (127)

38. Recall Claudius on Hamlet and brooding (3.1.161-6). I think it difficult to exaggerate how important Claudius' intuition here is: he recognizes, if

only subliminally, the woman in Hamlet, the *egg-bearer*, and thus all the more pointed his earlier exclamation, "I like him not, nor *stands it* safe with us" (3.3.1; emphasis added). See, further, Fineman, "Fratricide" 101ff.

39. Hence the notorious crux, in this speech peculiar to Q2 (namely, "the dram of eale"), is amenable to a certain emendation:

> HAMLET So, oft it chances in particular men
> That, for some vicious mole of nature in them —
> . . .
> the dram of [z]eale
> Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
> To his own scandal. (1.4.18.20-2)

Using some of the Norton edition's glosses, I would paraphrase the text to say, with my emendation of "eale" to "[z]eale": "the tiny amount (eighth of an ounce) of *excess desire* ([z]eale) does make all the noble substance part of a doubt, to his own scandal."

This construction and paraphrase track and continue the logic of the earlier part of Hamlet's speech where "o'ergrowth" and "o'erleavens" suggest a failure of proportion between the "vicious mole" (a tiny blemish) and the "virtues else . . . as pure as grace" (1.4.18.17); in other words, my emendation "[z]eale" here would suggest exactly that excess (desire) only a "dram" of which, a tiny bit of which, would be enough to swell so as to overwhelm the "noble substance" to the point "of a doubt," which, in turn, would be enough for "scandal."

This, of course, is only conjecture.

40. See among others, Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* 13ff. For me, also, of enduring importance for understanding *copia* in early modern literature is the remarkable study by Cave.

41. Here it is relevant, not to mention proper, that I acknowledge these other scholars precisely by remarking that their copiousness empowers my ability to copy from them, as I learn from them, but also that my copying from them, to develop my own theses, attests to and legitimates their copiousness. The genealogy of learning is familial — and most of its crises are like those of a (more or less dysfunctional) family (in which incest is not unheard of). Have we here, I permit myself to wonder, one reason why *Hamlet* is the site of such immense scholarly and critical activity? Here, in this play, if anywhere, sons and daughters must *separare* in order to *se parere* (and my macaronic French and English is itself evidence of the crisis). Indeed, now perhaps, just so, is the time for me to acknowledge my likeness, and unlikeness, to Shell, who writes brilliantly of likeness and the *lex talionis* in Shakespeare (117-36, in particular); but not only did I develop my ideas before reading his work (the obligatory if petulant plea of professionalism), also I differ from him in my insistence on the uncanny sign of *like*(ness), even as I depend on him to explain so well "the movement . . . from substitution and likeness to identification" (136).

42. I have entitled my next book of poems, almost complete, *Songs of Coincidence*; samples can be read on my WebPage.

43. With this conclusion, I look, obviously, to the probable chronology of

the plays: *As You Like It* precedes *Hamlet* which is followed by *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*; all three plays concern themselves both with the subjectivity of *like*(ness) and the arbitrariness of the medium that signifies the like. For helpful commentary on *As You Like It*, see Howard's headnote in *The Norton Shakespeare*, especially 1598.

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